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SUBJECT: NETHERLANDS/EU: SELLING THE EU TO EUROPE

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¶1. (U) SUMMARY: On April 15, Austrian State Secretary for Foreign Affairs Hans Winkler and Dutch Minister for European Affairs Frans Timmermans discussed promoting the EU. Addressing an audience of approximately thirty diplomats at the Netherlands Institute for International Relations (Clingendael), Winkler argued that governments must show citizens that there are practical benefits from the EU. Timmermans suggested that in promoting the EU, governments needed to address economic uncertainty from globalization as well as the impact of immigration. END SUMMARY.

Winkler: Show Citizens EU Benefits

¶2. (U) Noting that only the British and Latvians were more skeptical of the EU than Austrians, Winkler suggested politicians need to show practical benefits from EU membership. He cited consumer protections, the Erasmus education program, and the EU health card. Austrians have seen a growth in prosperity since EU accession -- Austria has overtaken Switzerland as the fourth most wealthy nation in Europe. EU skeptics suggested that moving the Schengen border would increase crime in Austria, but the reverse is true. "Border checks don't reduce crime;" law enforcement cooperation reduces crime. Job growth in Romania creates jobs in Austria. Despite these results, a populist newspaper owner in Austria has helped move Austrians toward a more skeptical view of the EU. Winkler visited Sweden to learn how the government had succeeded in boosting the image of the EU.

Timmermans: Address Citizens' Fears

¶3. (U) Timmermans agreed that EU citizens were looking for the "next benefit" when weighing the value of the EU. Yes, the EU had created new jobs for both Austria and the Netherlands, but citizens don't always see the new jobs as an improvement. European leaders need to respond to middle class fears that globalization will result in a decline in their economic situation; they need to show the prospect of equal or better jobs. In addition, citizens are concerned about their identity, and the impact of immigration. One tool the Dutch used to promote the EU was to bring Dutch EU employees to high schools to discuss their work. These EU employees have spoken to more than fifteen thousand students. At the same time, however, governments are criticized for supporting the EU and not sharing information, but accused of spreading propaganda if they share too much.

¶4. (SBU) Comment: Winkler appeared frustrated with public perceptions of the EU in Austria. In addition, at the same time as he spoke of the need to show concrete results, he interspersed results with more idealistic messages, suggesting that leaders should discuss a "European way of

life" that promotes human rights, tolerance, social security, and good jobs. EU values include the "relinquishment of nationalism" although most Europeans are opposed to a "superstate." Winkler was surprised and interested to learn of Dutch outreach to high school students. Both Winkler and Timmermans agreed that older people were more skeptical of the EU. Timmermans stated "my own mother doesn't believe me" when I explain that the Euro did not cause inflation.
Gallagher